



September 22, 2009

## **COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS**

Monday, my appointments to the Senate Armed Services Committee, the Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee, and the Senate's Special Committee on Aging were announced. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve on these important committees that oversee and influence areas directly impacting the lives of every Floridian. I will be an active member on each assignment, seeking solutions to the wide range of issues brought before these committees. I thank Republican Leader Mitch McConnell for his assistance in securing these key positions.

## **THE SENATE HEALTH CARE DEBATE**

This week, the Senate Finance Committee will begin putting together a health care reform bill. Through this debate, I remain willing and open to help craft a proposal that will reduce costs and increase access to health care. One of the concerns I have is that we should not achieve reform at the expense of seniors. Last week, U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) released his 1,000 page health care proposal. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said the Baucus proposal takes more than 400 billion dollars away from Medicare and Medicare Advantage - a program that allows 916,000 Florida seniors to have enhanced health care coverage. I will continue to keep you informed on this debate as it moves forward.

## **NOTABLE VOTES**

This week the Senate continues debating funding for the Department of Interior's programs for the coming year. One of our first actions was to ensure the controversial not-for-profit group ACORN is prohibited from receiving additional Federal dollars. I voted to block ACORN from

receiving Federal tax dollars because of their questionable activities. This is the second such vote in as many weeks barring ACORN from receiving Federal funds. Both efforts received overwhelming majorities voting to block the funds.

I also voted to prohibit stimulus funds from paying for special signage at construction sites identifying a project as the result of the stimulus package. Unfortunately, the amendment failed. The special signage is estimated to cost taxpayers as much as 15 million dollars. While letting people know what they are receiving for their tax dollars is good in concept, I could not support the expenditure when we continue to spend more in government than we receive, thereby increasing deficits to be paid by our children and future generations.

## **FIRST TIME HOMEBUYER CREDIT EXPIRING**

Time is running out to take advantage of the Federal government's offer of an \$8,000 first-time homebuyer tax credit. To qualify, homebuyers must complete a first-time home purchase before December 1, 2009. This means the last day to close on a home and take advantage of the credit is November 30. I encourage potential homebuyers to take advantage of market prices and this tax credit. While I support extending this tax credit, Congress has not yet acted. Potential buyers should be aware the current credit expires on the last day of November. For more information on the first-time homebuyer tax credit and how to apply, visit the Internal Revenue Services Web site <http://www.irs.gov>.

## **MEETINGS AND GREETINGS**

In the last few days, I had a meeting with members of the Broward County School Board where we discussed their efforts to improve college entrance exam scores. For their work, the school district was recently recognized with the Broad Prize for Urban Education award, which comes with a \$250,000 scholarship fund for graduating seniors. My wife Meike and I are proud products of the Broward public school system, and it was great to visit with their leadership.



I met with Florida A & M University President Dr. James Ammons and congratulated him for achieving full accreditation for the FAMU College of Law. This is an important milestone and speaks volumes about the hard work Dr. Ammons and others have put toward providing a quality education.

I welcomed executives from Disney and other tourism industries to Washington for a legislative conference. I stressed the importance of promoting the United States to foreign visitors. Tourism has taken a hit during the global economic recession and that has had an impact on

Florida's families. My hope is the U.S. will compete alongside with other nations who already spend millions promoting their countries as a tourist destination. I favor Congress's effort to allow the tourism industry to create a promotion fund to achieve this goal.

## **PLEASE VISIT OR CALL**

I have moved into my office in the Russell Senate Office Building. I hope you will visit on your next trip to Washington, or call us if we can be any assistance to you. You can reach me toll free in Florida at 866-630-7106 or in Washington, DC at 202-224-3041.

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